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Piedmont Park Conservancy

Piedmont Park Conservancy is the nonprofit organization, working with the City of Atlanta for the preservation of historic Piedmont Park. Since 1989, the Conservancy has raised and invested more than \$23 million in private funds to transform the once dilapidated Park into the most visited in green space in Atlanta. In addition to raising funds for capital improvements throughout the 185-acre park, the Conservancy manages more than 90 percent of the Park's daily maintenance care and security.



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"I love walking through the park and seeing all the different faces of Atlanta. This truly is our common ground."
— Teresa, age 49



PHOTO: JEFF KEMPH

Mission

To enhance and preserve Piedmont Park as a vital urban green space and as a cultural and recreational resource that enhances the quality of life for all Atlantans.

Goals

- Improve accessibility to and within the Park;
- Restore and protect the Park's natural environment and historic character;
- Enhance conditions for the safe enjoyment of the Park;
- Provide education and recreation programs for

Park goes;

- Host volunteer activities in the Park.

History

During the late 1970s and into the 1980s, many great parks around the country were in despair because cities had neither the capacity nor resources needed to maintain them adequately. The same was true for Piedmont Park, where large-scale concerts and years of overuse nearly ran the Park into the ground.

Then in 1989, a group of key citizens, along with members of the business and leadership communities from around the city formed Piedmont Park Conservancy, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to restoring the Park. In 1992, the Conservancy signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the City of Atlanta, establishing a public/private partnership similar to that of the Central Park Conservancy in New York City.

The Conservancy has since raised more than \$23 million in private funds for several completed renovations in the historic portion of the Park, including the restoration of the Active Oval, Lake Clara Meer and Oak Hill.

Piedmont Park Conservancy this year announced plans to expand the Park by 53-acres. The first phase of the \$72.5 million expansion, scheduled to begin later this fall with the renovation of the historic Bathhouse and pools, will net a 40 percent increase in useable green space, woodland trails, playgrounds and athletic fields.

Accomplishments

Master Plan Restoration Projects

The Conservancy has raised nearly \$20 million in private funds to complete the first half of Master Plan Restoration. To learn more, click Park Restoration [Park Restoration](#).

Additional Improvements

- **Landscaping Project:** Habersham Gardens Landscape Division donated plant materials and staff time (valued at nearly \$15,000!) for landscape enhancements to the Charles Allen entrance of Piedmont Park. [Click here](#) to see before and after photos of the Charles Allen entryway. For more information on Habersham Gardens, call 404.873.2484.
- **Restroom Renovations:** Renovated the restrooms

located below the Noguchi Playscape and also installed a new set of restrooms below Magnolia Hall (\$50,000).

- **Increased Lighting:** Installed new historic light poles round the park (\$600,000).
- **Enhanced Streetscapes:** In collaboration with the Midtown Alliance, 10th Street and Piedmont Avenue now have improved pedestrian access, wider sidewalks, street lights, street trees and a pedestrian drop off lane on Piedmont Avenue.
- **Additional Green Space & Trees**
 - While completing Master Plan restoration projects, the Conservancy has also added/restored approximately 67 acres of new grass/sod.
 - Reduced the amount of impervious surface in the Park by narrowing roadways by 2 to 3 feet and creating green medians along the edge of roadways.
 - Planted more than 600 trees (conservatively estimated at \$300,000) in the last 5 years alone.
 - Invested \$300,000 to care for more than 1,000 mature trees in the Park including pruning, deep fertilization, insect/disease control and kudzu removal.
 - Implemented a tree identification program to better manage and care for Park trees.
 - Planted native plants around the lake edge including littoral shelves, water-based plants that provide habitat and food for wildlife.
- **New Signage/Way-Finding:** A new signage and way-finding system utilizes obelisks to assist Park visitors in understanding Park rules, using way-finding maps and learning about the Parks' rich history. By keeping the actual signage low to the ground, the park view is unimpeded.
- **New and Refurbished Playgrounds:** Added the Saturn Playground and renovated Noguchi Playscape.
- **Irrigation System:** Installed and maintain a state of the art irrigation system that monitors water usage and can detect problems and shut down if there is a break in the system.
- **Entryway Beautification:** Added beautiful gates at 12th and 14th Streets that provide welcoming entryways into the Park. Additionally, improvements to the 12th Street entryway ensure that this major entry point welcomes Park visitors with gardens and benches and lush green lawn.

Daily Maintenance & Care

Keeping Piedmont Park clean and beautifully landscaped is a never-ending job.

- Over the years, the Conservancy has take on more of the City's daily duties, now fulfilling nearly 85% of Piedmont Park's maintenance needs.
- The Conservancy employs six landscape maintenance workers and contributes more than \$300,000 annually for landscape maintenance and equipment.
- The Conservancy works closely with festival organizers, including the Atlanta Dogwood Festival, Pride Festival and Peachtree Road Race, to develop and enforce a set of standards that help protect Piedmont Park from harm during large-scale public gatherings and events.

Increased Security

The Conservancy funds and manages off-duty police officers to patrol the Park for added security. In May 2004, the Conservancy also assumed the management of the City's security contract for the Park. Now security personnel actively patrol the Park instead of just remaining on the bridge.

New Park Amenities

The Conservancy is committed to finding ways to meet the changing needs of Park users, evident by the following recent additions:

- An off-leash dog park that is sustained entirely by donations and Conservancy maintenance efforts. The addition of a dog park required the support of City Council. The first of its kind in Atlanta, the dog park is one of the most popular areas of the Park.
- Installed the following:
 - Benches: 69 (\$103,000)
 - Swings: 11 (\$110,000)
 - Trash cans: 65 (\$55,000)
 - Water fountains: 14 (\$140,000 has been allocated to add a total of 28 fountains)
 - Grills: Added 20 fixed grills and repaired 2 stone BBQ pits (\$8,000)
 - Temporary designated volleyball area in the Active Oval

Community Inclusive Planning/Advisory Committee

The Conservancy follows a community-inclusive process for

gathering input on improvements. An Advisory Committee comprised of representatives from the park's many constituencies is formed to oversee each major planning or restoration initiative.

Children's Programs

- **Environmental Education:** The Conservancy offers environmental education year-round for children K – 12, using the park as a unique outdoor classroom.
- **Saturday Safari:** This outdoor adventure is Good Green Fun for the whole family. With a different theme each time, parents and kids (ages 6 to 12) can enjoy a variety of fun activities like fishing, crafts, planting, bird-watching, eco-art and scavenger hunts. Saturday Safari is held April - September, first and third Saturdays).
- **Day Camps:** The Conservancy and the YMCA host day camps that enables children to explore different aspects of art and culture, the environment and outdoor recreation.

Community Programs

- **Green Market at Piedmont Park:** This unique, open-air market features Georgia-grown produce, fresh cut flowers, baked goods and herbs, along with chef demonstrations and live music. Together with the Bureau of Cultural Affairs, the Conservancy hosts the Green Market program every Saturday morning from 9:00am to 1:00pm near the Park's 12th Street entrance gate.
- **Park Tours:** Free guided walking tours offer a fascinating look at the park's rich history on Saturdays from 11:00am to 12:30pm (April – October).
- **Senior Citizens:** The Conservancy plans a variety of activities to encourage older adults to visit the Park.

Volunteerism

The Conservancy recruits volunteers to keep Piedmont Park beautiful through monthly "Clean & Green" projects.

Documenting Piedmont Park's History

The Conservancy consulted with two historians to document and compile the Park's rich history. Before this, the history of the Park was sparse and scattered. The culmination is a new book entitled "Piedmont Park: Celebrating Atlanta's Common Ground".

Recent Accolades

- The Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation, Stewardship Award, 2004
- Keep Georgia Beautiful, Distinguished Service Award for Beautification and Community Improvement, 2004
- Urban Design Commission Award of Excellence 2004, Clara Meer Bridge
- Project for Public Spaces, Finalist, Catalyst Award for Urban Park Leadership 2003
- Urban Design Commission Award of Excellence 2003, Oak Hill

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